United Nations S/PV.7510

# Security Council

Seventieth year

*Provisional*

**7510**th meeting
Friday, 21 August 2015, 10.10 a.m.
New York

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| *President:* | Mrs. Ogwu | (Nigeria) |
| *Members:* | Angola | Mr. Casimiro |
| | Chad | Mr. Mangaral |
| | Chile | Mr. Barros Melet |
| | China | Mr. Wang Min |
| | France | Mr. Stehelin |
| | Jordan | Mr. Hmoud |
| | Lithuania | Ms. Murmokaitė |
| | Malaysia | Mr. Ibrahim |
| | New Zealand | Ms. Darlow |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Spain | Mr. Gasso Matoses |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Meek |
| | United States of America | Mr. Pressman |
| | Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) | Mr. Méndez Graterol |

## Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2015/579)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2015/579)**

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Zarif, who is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hashim Thaçi to participate in this meeting.

The Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/579, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

**Mr. Zarif**: The report before the Council details the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) during the latest quarterly reporting period from 16 April to 15 July. Beyond simply presenting the report, I will also reflect briefly on the wider range of important achievements, as well as challenges, facing Kosovo at this time.

I would like to begin by commending the critically important step taken by the Kosovo institutions on the third of this month, when the Assembly of Kosovo passed the requisite constitutional amendment and the laws on the establishment of the specialist court and specialist prosecutor's office. These legislative acts fully accord with the exchange of letters between Kosovo and the European Union (EU) on the matter, which were endorsed by the Assembly in April 2014.

As reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/579), delays in finalizing the required framework had been the subject of serious concern from various quarters. However, the passage of necessary formative acts and their promulgation yesterday by President Jahjaga stand as a sign of Kosovo's increasing determination to meet its fundamental obligations and commitments, which imply full respect for the rule of law and impartial justice, as well as accountability and equality before the law.

The full establishment of the rule of law is facing other important challenges, which merit mention today. One of them is the legal protection of cultural and religious heritage sites. In June, the Appellate Panel of the Special Chamber of the Kosovo Supreme Court issued decisions that, in effect, set aside a landmark decision by the Trial Panel of the Special Chamber in December 2012. That decision concerned property within the special protective zone of the Visoki Dečani Orthodox Monastery. The 2012 decision rejected claims of ownership by two socially owned enterprises against the Visoki Dečani Monastery. The resolution of this outstanding dispute had been accepted by the two parties to the dispute and hailed by the international community. In contrast, the Appellate Panel's decision applied highly questionable legal reasoning in order to return the issue to a local court, which assuredly will reopen the dispute and potentially lead to serious new tensions surrounding that precious cultural and religious heritage site.

Respect for and the protection and preservation of the Serbian Orthodox cultural heritage in Kosovo are fundamental duties and represent tests of the responsibility of Kosovo's governing institutions. Should those fail, many other important functions and responsibilities may equally fall into question. It is therefore a matter of utmost importance that the legal framework of protection enshrined in the Constitution of Kosovo be adhered to with conscientious rigour. That includes but is not limited to the Assembly of Kosovo's future consideration of a comprehensive law on cultural heritage. I commend the firm assurances given to me by Prime Minister Isa Mustafa that a revised version

of the draft law will not be approved by the Cabinet and submitted to the Assembly unless it fully conforms with the relevant provisions of the Constitution.

The enormous strides already taken both by Pristina and Belgrade through the EU-facilitated dialogue demand continuing commitment on the part of the parties, and no less from the international community. On 25 August, the top leaders from each side will meet once again, seeking accord on issues where differences — while narrowed — still remain. Among those issues, setting forth a detailed framework for the establishment of the future association/community of Serb-majority municipalities is of paramount importance. Several other matters are now equally ripe for conclusion. Already, the implementation of the arrangements on mutual recognition of vehicular insurance, which began just this past week, is providing evidence of the benefits accruing from the normalization of relations.

It is important not to underestimate the potential of this historic process, begun under the tenure of EU High Representative Ashton and now in the capable hands of her successor, Federica Mogherini. Reaching equitable compromises that overcome legacies from the conflict and produce tangible benefit to both sides is not limited only to the terms of the First Agreement reached on 19 April 2013. During the coming days, it is my hope that dialogue will expand to include other difficult issues that continue to burden relations. Among those, I would highlight renewed effort to determine the fate of missing persons and to provide a scheme for compensating their families; to revitalize transportation and commercial links; to address the many complex issues surrounding property; to deal with issues of the return and settlement of refugees and internally displaced persons; and to discuss the status of the Orthodox Church.

As Council membes are already aware, this will be my last briefing to the Council in my capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo. I therefore hope that they will permit me a few brief reflections on the trends and processes I have witnessed. When I arrived in Kosovo soon after the events of July 2011, tension was extremely high on the ground. Road barricades had been erected throughout the north, and the international security presences had been forced into a strong preventive posture. Public political discourse among the communities in Kosovo, as well as between Belgrade and Priština, was adversarial and confrontational. Few, if any, conciliatory messages could be heard from any side.

Four years later, the situation differs dramatically. Kosovo Serb mayors — elected for the first time under a unified legal framework — now govern in all 10 Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities, including the four municipalities in the north. Kosovo Serb Ministers and Parliamentarians now serve actively in key positions of the central institutions, promoting the vital interests not only of their own community, but increasingly of the electorate as a whole. Police structures are fully integrated, and thereby more responsive. Significant progress has been made towards the integration of all components of the justice system. Through a process of committed dialogue and political compromise, the concrete needs and aspirations of people — perhaps for the first time since the conflict itself — register more loudly in the public discourse than do insinuations about the past.

No progress is irreversible, of course. I do not wish to suggest that the efforts made to date are yet sufficient to guarantee headway. I do, however, firmly believe that there is objective justification for cautious optimism that this process will continue and produce more tangible results in the interest of all.

It has been my privilege to serve during these past four years, and I will depart the Mission with strong confidence in the leadership I have observed on each side, as well as from the people. Their future is being built around a shared stake in creating the conditions for long term peace and prosperity.

I conclude my remarks today by expressing my deep gratitude to you, Madam President, and to all members of the Council for their support to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and me. Much has been achieved, and I am confident that the positive progress will only accelerate in the time ahead. The next period will bring not only further challenges but also, I am confident and certain, further progress, not least due to the Council's continuing support and engagement. UNMIK, my successor and the entire United Nations presence in Kosovo will remain committed to contributing to that end.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

**Mr. Dačić** (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): I am honoured

on this occasion to address the Security Council, convened to consider the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/579) on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 16 April to 15 July 2015. I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Security Council for the attention they continue to accord the question of Kosovo and Metohija, which is of priority importance to the Republic of Serbia.

Through its proactive engagement and compromise-seeking approach, the Republic of Serbia has made every effort to contribute to the lasting peace, stability and prosperity of the Western Balkans. It is evident that substantive progress has been made in the region in the fields of peacebuilding and democratization. Exceptional results have been achieved in strengthening regional cooperation and in the process of European integration, to which the Republic of Serbia has made an important contribution. Yet, it is necessary for all countries of the region, as well as relevant international actors, to invest additional efforts in maintaining and promoting stability, all the more as it remains brittle and in view of the challenges that we continue to face.

An exceptionally important role in this context is played by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and Metohija, and I shall repeat also on this occasion that a status-neutral and undiminished presence of UNMIK is of paramount importance to stability and the creation of conditions leading to a lasting and sustainable solution for the question of Kosovo and Metohija on the basis of resolution 1244 (1999). I therefore reiterate our strong opposition to any downsizing of the Mission and reduction of its activities. Serbia highly appreciates UNMIK's engagement towards creating the basic preconditions for the peaceful coexistence of the ethnic communities in the province, security and respect for the basic human and civil rights of all its inhabitants. Accordingly, we expect UNMIK to continue to implement its mandate under resolution 1244 (1999), particularly in the areas that are important to the survival and normal and dignified life of the Serbs and other non-Albanian communities.

We appreciate the contribution of other international organizations whose missions, carried out under the auspices of the United Nations, are constituent parts of international civil and military presences in the Serbian southern province, including as the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo. Bearing in mind that this is his last participation in a meeting of the Security Council on the work of UNMIK in his capacity of Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, I express my special gratitude to Mr. Farid Zarif for his efforts to implement the UNMIK mandate and to coordinate the international presences, notwithstanding the persistent challenges. I take this opportunity to wish him, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and in my own name, much success in his new mission.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has confirmed in practical terms its full commitment to the dialogue conducted with the facilitation of the European Union. We expect its continuation to solidify the basis for the implementation of agreements already achieved. Serbia consistently meets all its obligations under the agreements reached thus far in the framework of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, initialled in Brussels in April 2013. I am pleased to note that the formation of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities has been singled out among the key issues in the context of the implementation of the Brussels Agreement and that, equally historic, the visit of Serbian Prime Minister Aleksander Vučić to Albania has been recognized as another clear indication of our commitment to and active engagement in the promotion of the stability and European integration of the region as a whole.

The continuation of the dialogue at a high political level provides the necessary political momentum to the quest for mutually acceptable responses to issues that burden the life of the people of the province and prevent the exercise of their basic rights. Serbia has approached the dialogue with Pristina with a genuine desire to find solutions that will allow all the inhabitants of the province to normalize their lives within the broader process of the integration of the region into the European Union. It is in this context that the participation of the Serbs in the political life of Kosovo and Metohija is also being evolved. Going forward, in addition to the aforementioned formation of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities, the key issues for Serbia in the dialogue with Pristina remain those of internally displaced persons and the position of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as property issues.

As I point out regularly at Security Council meetings on the work of UNMIK, the Republic of Serbia comports itself with full respect and appreciation for resolution 1244 (1999). I have repeatedly stressed the constructiveness of the Government of the Republic of Serbia vis-à-vis the participation of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo and Metohija in the work of regional forums without prejudging their status. Yet, we continue to be met with Pristina's efforts and requests to be included in the work of international organizations outside the context of the agreement on regional representation and cooperation, which are unacceptable to the Republic of Serbia. The latest such examples are Kosovo's attempts to become a member of UNESCO and INTERPOL.

As a territory administered by the United Nations under the valid and mandatory resolution 1244 (1999), Kosovo is not and cannot be considered a State subject to international law and cannot, ipso facto, qualify for admission to organizations such as those to which I have referred. In that sense, each and every different attitude to the consideration of the question of Kosovo's membership in these organizations would be tantamount to ignoring — that is, violating — the legal rules created under the auspices of the United Nations for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security. When and if such a time comes, these questions should become the subjects of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia attaches special importance to the quest for a solution to the problem of internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. Creating conditions for their sustainable return is one of the key elements of the process of reconciliation. It is with regret that I have also to note on this occasion that, even 16 years after the end of the conflict and notwithstanding the years-long presence of the international community, no conditions exist in Kosovo and Metohija for the unhindered and sustainable return of internally displaced persons, as is also noted in regular reports of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK and in reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

To correctly illustrate my contention and to help explain the magnitude of the obstacles that still hinder the return of displaced persons to Kosovo and Metohija, let me remind the Council of the data according to which an average of 25 per cent of refugees and displaced persons in the world return home upon the end of conflicts. According to the statistics, the minimum is 12 per cent, while the maximum can amount even to more than 50 per cent. Out of the more than 220,000 persons who left Kosovo and Metohija since 1999, only 1.9 per cent achieved sustainable return in the past 16 years, while about 204,000 persons continue to be displaced in Serbia. Accordingly, the percentage of sustainable returns in this concrete case is below all world standards and averages. The most recent report on UNMIK bears out the continuity of the descending trend of returns, while Serbia continues to top the list of European countries by the number of internally displaced in protracted displacement. I simply wanted to familiarize the Security Council with that data, as the Council has jurisdiction over such issues. How can it be acceptable for any country that 1.9 per cent of displaced persons have been able to return? The Council meets daily to discuss various regions. It cannot remain silent in the face of the fact that only 1.9 per cent of the displaced have returned to Kosovo over the past 16 years. Perhaps it is the case that, when it comes to Serbia and Serbs, everything is accepted and allowed.

The necessary conditions for return include appropriate security guarantees as well such conditions as the freedom of movement, an effective mechanism for the restitution of property and other appurtenant rights, protection against discrimination, guaranteed access to institutions of the system, documents and justice and support to returnees to regain economic independence. What is also necessary is to prevent the obstruction of returns, along with full respect for the principle of the responsibility of international and local actors engaged in the process.

I therefore call on the United Nations and other representatives of the international Administration in Kosovo to help overcome problems that make the return of internally displaced persons even more difficult and aggravate their already distressing situation, which is replete with constant security incidents, including personal attacks and attacks on property. The situation is further exacerbated by the climate of impunity for crimes committed against Serbs — a reflection of the fact that no legally valid sentence has yet been pronounced against a single perpetrator of any of the more than 1,000 killings of Serbs committed since 1999.

The majority of attacks in the reporting period were aimed at the property of returnees and at returnees themselves in the localities of Klina, Peć

and Goraždevac, as well as at religious sites. Also, an explosive device was discovered in the vicinity of the Holy Trinity Monastery at Mušutište, in the municipality of Suva Reka. The incident occurred immediately before a visit of about 100 internally displaced Serbs who intended to mark a religious feast on the ruins of the Monastery.

Proper records on ethnically motivated incidents are still non-existent, just as is proper intervention by the competent authorities of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. That is yet another indication of how much effort and will still need to be invested in beginning serious and genuine work on reconciliation and in ensuring a proper approach to the problem. In that regard, promises do not suffice; what is needed instead are concrete results so that a clear message is sent to those who obstruct the survival and return of Serbs to Kosovo and Metohija that such activities, harmful to the process of reconciliation, will not be tolerated, and to Serbs and other non-Albanians that they may return and exercise their human rights and freedoms freely and without apprehension. If that is not possible, then the Security Council should send a message to all the Serbs expelled from Kosovo that it has not been able to ensure their safe return. I think that is only fair and just to the Serbian people, given that many countries represented in the Security Council have demonstrated their willingness to participate in the reconciliation process in the region. Perhaps by such an example the Council could show whether or not it has the will to guarantee and safeguard Serb returns. Again, I would reiterate that 200,000 Serbs were expelled and nothing has been done. I believe Serbs deserve a response, even if it is negative.

As I did in my last statement to this body (see S/PV.7448), it is with concern that I again warn that the desecration of Serbian monasteries is continuing. That is a way of intimidating the remaining Orthodox population in the province. The latest example was the attack on the Orthodox Church of Saint Petka in the returnee village of Drsnik.

One of the characteristics of the Serbian heritage in Kosovo and Metohija is its connection to living history. Its existence testifies to the ages-long presence of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija. On this occasion, I would also like to point to the drastic discrepancy between the verbal pronouncements and real attitude of Pristina to the question of the protection of Serbian cultural heritage. Practical examples are the best proof of this. Since June 1999, 236 churches, monasteries and other sites owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as cultural-historical monuments, have been targets of attacks. As many as 61 of them have the status of cultural monuments, while 18 are of exceptional importance for Serbia. And four of them have World Heritage Site status and are under the protection of UNESCO. Let me mention just a few: the Church of the Virgin Hodegetria, from 1315; the Church of Saint Nicholas, from 1331; the Church of Saint Saviour, from 1348; and the Monastery and Hermitage of Saint Peter Koriski, from the beginning of the thirteenth century. One hundred and seventy-four religious sites and 33 cultural-historical monuments have been pillaged or destroyed in Kosovo and Metohija, while more than 10,000 icons and other ecclesiastical artistic and liturgical items have been stolen. Five thousand two hundred and sixty-one tombstones on 256 Serbian Orthodox graveyards have been destroyed or damaged, and not a single intact tombstone stands on more than 50 of the graveyards. Therefore, it is not only live Serbs who are the targets of attacks, but also the dead.

That was testified to by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said in a statement at the scene of one such attack that the deliberate targeting of religious sites, such as churches, cemeteries and monasteries, was shameful and inexcusable. The attacks on Serbian heritage are in that sense tantamount to attacks on the identity of the Serbs, and affect directly their feeling of acceptance in local communities. As part and parcel of attempts to alter historical facts, they are aimed at marginalizing and eliminating the presence of Serbs and Serbia in the history of Kosovo and Metohija.

That is evinced also by the draft law on cultural heritage that is in the process of being adopted in the Kosovo Parliament and that denies the private ownership of churches and monasteries to the Serbian Orthodox Church and provides that they, as well as all other heritage in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, are the cultural heritage owned by the "State of Kosovo".

Members will agree with me that those who aspire to UNESCO membership should confirm, not only in words, but also in deeds, the commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Constitution of UNESCO, the provisions of which are poles apart from the deliberate, systematic vandalizing of cultural and historic monuments of their fellow citizens aimed at removing the traces of the ages-long existence of a

people in a territory, as well as the failure to punish the perpetrators of these acts of vandalism unworthy of the twenty-first century. Attached to my statement are images of the destruction and a map of Serbian cultural heritage and monuments in Kosovo. Unfortunately, the majority of them have been devastated and destroyed. The images show those monasteries and churches before their demolition and the way they look today. There are also television broadcasts and videos that show the devastation of Serbian monasteries. The membership of UNESCO cannot condemn the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for ruining and demolishing its cultural heritage while simultaneously rewarding those who are doing the same thing elsewhere. There is a monastery in Dečani that is under the protection of UNESCO. The pictures I have provided show what has been written on the walls of that monastery, which is also under the protection of international forces, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR). Written in Arabic, under the name of ISIL, it says that the caliphate is on its way.

We condemn each and every act of desecration of the religious sites of any and all faiths. However, while ISIL's desecration and destruction of the cultural and religious heritage in the Middle East is met with a worldwide outcry and condemned as terrorism, the candidate for UNESCO membership who desecrates and destroys Serbia's cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija receives a pat on the shoulders as their reward. That is absolutely unacceptable to the Republic of Serbia. After all, resolution 1244 (1999) remains the only valid legal framework regulating the question of Kosovo and Metohija. If that were not the case, why would we be convening today's meeting? If resolution 1244 (1999) is no longer valid, why are we meeting? If displaced Serbs cannot freely and safely visit religious sites and celebrate religious holidays in a dignified manner, then the calls and encouragement of the Kosovo institutions to displaced Serbs to return are highly dubious, as is their ability to provide safety and security to all in Kosovo, particularly at the local level.

I recall that we have been discussing those issues in Brussels, but what kind of discussion is possible when there is no mention of the fact that Kosovo is seeking membership in UNESCO and INTERPOL? The property of the Orthodox Serbian Church is on the agenda in Brussels, but behind our backs they are trying to bypass the Security Council and resolution 1244 (1999) and to request such membership. Those who granted those sites World Heritage status are the same countries represented here today that are also members of UNESCO.

I believe that the creation of conditions for the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations to enjoy basic human rights without discrimination would contribute to the improvement of the overall atmosphere for the return of internally displaced persons. Furthermore, we take this opportunity to express our regret at the closure, without consultation with the Republic of Serbia, of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Pristina, which was headed by the representative of a friendly country, Jordan. Taken allegedly for financial reasons, that decision was far from justified by the human rights situation in Kosovo and Metohija. How is it possible to justify such a decision at a time when those tasked with addressing human rights in Belgrade are being offered extended resources while the same capacities in Pristina are simultaneously downsized? I urge members and Jordan to ask the High Commissioner for Human Rights how that can be justified.

As a sponsor of resolution 2178 (2014), the Republic of Serbia has taken all possible measures to suppress the financing and organizing of terrorism and the ever more widespread phenomenon of recruitment of foreign fighters who join armed terrorist organizations in the Middle East, such as the Islamic State. We expect the international missions in Kosovo and everyone else, as well as the local Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), to contribute, to the best of their abilities, to that important global struggle.

In the context of the priority that the Government of the Republic of Serbia attaches to the solution of property issues in Kosovo and Metohija, I would like to draw attention to the privatization processes being conducted by the Privatization Agency of Kosovo. UNMIK also determined that the process contravenes resolution 1244 (1999), since that Agency was not established under the laws in force in Kosovo and Metohija under the resolution. In that regard, it is evident that public and socially owned companies are being privatized in Serb-majority communities, leading us to conclude that the basic motivation of such privatizations, whose ethnic connotation is all too transparent, is precisely the destruction of economic resources in Serbian communities, which is incompatible with democratic achievements and European standards.

We all are well aware of the importance of respect for ownership rights, whether of private or public property. The cancellation of the sale and the liquidation of companies that are essential to the economic development of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija affect the key criteria for creating the conditions for a sustainable return. In that sense, it is necessary to ensure that all activities related to privatization in Kosovo and Metohija be restored to the valid legal frameworks.

We are deeply concerned that the draft law on the Kosovo Property Comparison and Verification Agency under consideration by the Parliament of Kosovo directly contravenes the 2011 technical agreement on cadastre records. The draft law would establish conditions for the legalization of property unlawfully expropriated from Serbs, which would do enormous and irreparable damage to the Serbian community in the province. With precisely that in mind, we have requested that the procedure for the adoption of the draft law be halted and that implementation begin on the technical agreement on cadastre records, which provides for the establishment of a body consisting of representatives of Belgrade, Pristina and the European Union that would conduct a comparison of cadastral records.

The current situation in the province bears out our assessment that conditions have not been met for the transfer of competencies in the rule of law sector to the provincial PISG. The fact that those competencies have been entrusted to EULEX does not diminish the authority and responsibility of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I expect that, within its powers, EULEX will continue to fulfil its executive competencies in the rule of law sector, bearing in mind a realistic appraisal of the situation in Kosovo in that area.

Serbia has stressed on a number of occasions the need for continual monitoring and for ensuring objective criteria for appraising the work of the provincial institutions by the relevant missions deployed in Kosovo and Metohija under the auspices of the United Nations. In its *Kosovo 2014 Progress Report*, the European Commission notes that much remains to be done with regard to the functioning and accountability of the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija. Likewise, strong concerns are also expressed in the European Parliament's March 2015 resolution 2015/413 on the European integration process of Kosovo with respect to the independence, accountability, impartiality and efficiency of judges and prosecutors and the overall performance of the rule of law sector. The resolution goes on to say that the implementation of legislation on the protection of ethnic minorities and their cultural rights remains a challenge in Kosovo and underscores the ongoing need for serious efforts with regard to adopting legislation in order to include provisions on the right of ethnic minorities with a view to preventing their direct and indirect discrimination.

I share the concern expressed in the report before us about the capacity of the Kosovo judiciary to handle socially sensitive issues. Highly illustrative in that context is the case related to the ownership rights to land within and outside the Visoki Dečani monastery, as mentioned in the report. At the same time, it provides telling evidence of the attitude of the PISG in Kosovo towards the Serbian cultural and Christian heritage, which on countless occasions has been the target of orchestrated vandal attacks of destruction, pillage, burning and desecration. None of the perpetrators of those heinous acts, unbefitting the Europe of the twenty-first century, has been properly tried in court. What we are faced with now are somewhat different but more perfidious methods. The goal, though, remains the same: to erase the traces of the centuries-long existence of the Serbs and Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija.

The new methodology is evidenced by the case of the property of the Dečani monastery, a jewel of not only the Serbian but also the European and world cultural heritage, which, alongside with Gracanica, the Church of Our Lady of Ljeviš and the Patriarchate of Peć, has been included on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger.

The decision of the Appellate Panel of the Special Chamber of the Kosovo Supreme Court that — notwithstanding the dissent of two international judges on the Panel — set aside the judgement rendered in 2012 in favour of the Dečani monastery by a mixed Trial Panel presided over by a EULEX judge, is an attack on the Dečani monastic fraternity, given that agricultural land is of key importance to the monastery's ability to be self-sustaining and that its security is at stake.

Bearing all of this in mind, it was with concern that we received information that EULEX was preparing to transfer the cases and the accompanying documentation processed by EULEX prosecutors and judges to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, that

is, the local judiciary. About 500 cases are involved, about 300 of them related to war crimes, of which 270 have been taken over from UNMIK. The Government of the Republic of Serbia expresses its concern at the intention to transfer the cases related to war crimes in the territory of Kosovo to the local judiciary, since all of them fall under the exclusive competence of EULEX, even after the amendment of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government regulations on the mandate of the EU Mission relating to the rule of law in the province.

In fact, it is provided that EULEX prosecutors should continue to process the cases in respect of which they decided to launch an investigation prior to 15 April 2014, as well as the cases allocated to EULEX prosecutors before this date, which include cases of war crimes that EULEX took over from the UNMIK judiciary. If EULEX does proceed to transfer the cases to the institutions in Pristina, in particular the sensitive cases relating to the investigation of the war crimes committed in the territory of Kosovo, the consequences of the processing of the war crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) against Serbs, non-Albanians and Albanians, labelled "Serbian collaborators" during the armed conflicts of 1998 and 1999, would be unforeseeable.

Let me point out that, since it is expected that a specialist court will soon be established to adjudicate the war crimes committed by the KLA in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and since that court is being established precisely because of the incapacity of the local Kosovo judiciary to investigate and try the perpetrators of war crimes from the ranks of the KLA, the transfer of war crimes cases to the local judiciary by EULEX runs counter to the activities of the international community aimed at establishing the specialist court.

There is reason to believe that, if said cases were to be transferred to the local judiciary, much of the material evidence would disappear and many witnesses would be intimidated, which would make the work of the future specialist court for war crimes much more difficult.

Politically motivated arrests and lengthy trials, as well as the different metrics of the local judiciary, should not be disregarded either. One example I cited at previous meetings of the Security Council is the case of Oliver Ivanović, the leader of the Citizens' Initiative Serbia, Democracy, Justice, who was detained at the end of January 2014 and remains in detention despite the guarantees and the calls made by the Government of Serbia that he be granted bail. In an effort to be accorded this right, Oliver Ivanović has been on a hunger strike for days now.

Serbia is committed to the process of reconciliation. In that context, it is crucially important to ascertain the fate of missing persons. To that end, Serbian experts and expert teams are cooperating with UNMIK and EULEX and with the competent agencies in Kosovo.

The process of mutual reconciliation cannot be completed without trying in court the former members of the KLA suspected of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the persecution of Serbs, Roma and other non-Albanians, as well as their political adversaries among Kosovo and Metohija Albanians.

We attach special importance to trying the cases that are based on the findings of the Special Investigative Task Force of the European Union, set up to conduct an investigation of the inhumane treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my conviction that a lasting and sustainable solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija can be reached only through dialogue, with full respect for the legitimate interests of the entire population of Kosovo and Metohija, on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), in the context of which we are working with dedication and commitment. In our efforts to achieve such a solution, it is necessary to bring about mutual reconciliation. This will certainly be helped by the adoption by our region of European standards and values on its path to the European Union. We expect the European Union to continue to facilitate our dialogue with Pristina. There is no doubt that the Government of the Republic of Serbia will continue its active engagement in the implementation of the Brussels agreements, in the interest of peace, stability and the economic development of the region.

I call on all actors to address this issue without any double standards. We cannot expect Serbia, which holds the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and is making every effort in that respect, to guard the territorial integrity of Ukraine but not to use the same zeal when protecting the territorial integrity of its own country. I believe that this world still functions on the basis of principles,

not according to who is closer or on better terms with whom. I am for dialogue, but we are against unilateral moves and actions. We have seen examples of this first-hand, not in cases relating to Serbia but in others where double standards have been applied.

As the Council is aware, I was born in Kosovo and Metohija 49 years ago, in the city of Prizren, which in the fourteenth century was the capital of Serbia proper. Today only 22 Serbs live in Prizren. That is a historical reality and fact. Today in Kosovo the majority of the population — 60 per cent — is Albanian. Hashim Thaçi, in earlier statements before the Council, has said that everyone supports this except for the Serbian Orthodox population. This is the first step in admitting to ethnic cleansing, because how can one say that with only 4 per cent of the population of Kosovo being Serbs, there has been no ethnic cleansing?

I would ask the members of the Security Council, leading figures in the United Nations, not to apply any double standards in the case of Serbia but to bring to bear the same zeal and the same principles that they have applied to other countries and peoples, and to take into consideration the historical and cultural heritage of the Serbs in this region. Serbs have extended the hand of reconciliation, which remains outstretched. But we did not raise both hands as a sign of surrender. We will fight for our interests through political and diplomatic means. What members see as being in the best interests of their countries is what they should ask of Serbia; we request that they please not ask us to apply double standards. We will see what the result of the voting in UNESCO is; we will probably see very different attitudes and positions with regard to the admittance of Kosovo to UNESCO. I think that we should stop working under the table and be open. We should be very frank as to whether resolution 1244 (1999) is still valid or whether Pristina believes that UNMIK should leave Kosovo.

If that is simply a waste of time, then we should put an end to it. We cannot participate in such matters if there are hidden attempts to find a back door for the admittance of Kosovo to UNESCO and other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. That should be a topic of frank and transparent talks. If the Council determines that resolution 1244 (1999) is no longer in effect, it should kindly clarify that intention.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Dačić for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Thaçi.

**Mr. Thaçi** (*spoke in Albanian; English text provided by the delegation*): I am very pleased to report today on the latest progress achieved in Kosovo, a new country now recognized by a majority of Member States.

At the outset, allow me to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zarif, for his work in Kosovo. He represented the United Nations in the course of the new situation in Kosovo following the declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo, the International Court of Justice opinion on the declaration's legality and on General Assembly resolution 64/298 of September 2010, which definitively closed the issue of the status of Kosovo by starting European Union-facilitated talks on the normalization of relations between the State of Kosovo and Serbia. As the same time, I would also like to welcome Mr Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan to his leadership of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. Afghanistan was one of the first countries in the world to recognize the independence of Kosovo.

In recent months, Kosovo has faced some of the most difficult challenges of the past few years. However, as the Council is aware, those challenges have also provided Kosovo with opportunities to demonstrate its transformation from an importer of security resources to an exporter of stability and peace initiatives in the region. I wish to inform the Council that the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo has now voted to amend the country's Constitution to create a specialist court that will adjudicate the alleged crimes cited in the report of the Council of Europe. The vote in our Parliament was overwhelmingly positive and consensual. As Deputy Prime Minister and the President of Parliament's largest party, I worked with my colleagues to convince fellow members and the greater public to establish this unusual legal instrument so that trials can be conducted in a credible, independent and internationally managed fashion.

It has been 17 years since the war in Kosovo began in 1998. Our resistance was a true case of David versus Goliath. I reaffirm that no Kosovar, myself included, will stand idly by and allow our specialist court to equate the genocidal acts of Slobodan Milošević and the State of Serbia with the later acts of desperate individuals from the community of the oppressed, committed during or after the war. Serbia's war against Kosovo was conducted with the involvement of the army, police and paramilitary units, and backed by Serbian intellectuals. It was a war of fascism, pure and

simple. We in Kosovo will not allow our history to be rewritten to blur the differences between hunter and prey. We will protect the legacy of our war — Kosovo's freedom and independence. Kosovo has now established an instrument that is far more credible than those used in trials of the courts in other Balkan countries.

We wish to thank those individual Member States that have noted and welcomed Kosovo's initiative, and I hope that the Security Council will also recognize the mature efforts of the Kosovo Government to deal with all crimes committed in the years of conflict. I also wish to invite European Union member countries to sign, without delay or prevarication, the Stabilization and Association Agreement in September. Any political delay in the signing of the Agreement or that on visa liberalization will be a strong setback to the dialogue process in Brussels.

As recently featured in the media, several Kosovar and international artists organized an event, the Thinking of You art exhibition and installation, to pay homage to the women raped by Serbian forces during the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo. The World Health Organization has concluded that 20,000 women — I repeat, 20,000 Albanian women — were raped and assaulted by the forces of the Serbian State during the war in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999. Fifteen years after the war, sadly, the tragedy of the rape of these women as a war crime in Kosovo has not been addressed by the mechanisms of international justice — neither by the United Nations nor by the Council of Europe.

The time has now come for international justice for the Kosovar women who were victims of a genocidal crime committed directly by the Serbian State. I therefore call on all members of the Security Council to support the petition signed by more than 150,000 citizens of Kosovo — all the people of Kosovo — seeking international justice for the Kosovar women raped by Serbians during the war. International humanitarian law, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and United Nations resolutions on that matter clearly state that issues of sexual violence in conflict cannot remain unrecognized and unpunished. Kosovo calls for justice.

Last winter, a huge number of Kosovars left Kosovo to seek asylum in European Union member countries. I am happy to report that we took strong measures to significantly lower the numbers of emigrating Kosovars. While the number of Kosovars claiming asylum in Germany reached 11,147 in March, by June the number had fallen to 1,373 and in July the number was in the hundreds and no longer in the thousands. Similarly, while the number of Kosovar asylum seekers in Hungary reached 14,000 in March, in June the number was below 300.

Our efforts to inform the Kosovo people were aided by European police forces that started monitoring the Serbian border with Hungary, where the illegal flow of immigrants was most rampant. Kosovo may have stemmed our numbers, but we are concerned about the fate of tens of thousands of Syrians who have left their country in the most tragic of circumstances. Kosovo is a country in which almost half of the population has experience as a refugee, and we sympathize with the plight of those who are seeking freedom and now filling the roads of our countries in search of it.

Part of our success to curtail the flow of asylum-seekers leaving Kosovo was due to some good news on the economic front. A French consortium won the bid to build a €400-million ski resort in Brezovica, which will greatly aid the resident Serbian community and bring fresh investments to Kosovo as a whole. We have also agreed to investments in our energy system, and with the help of the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development, we are completing a transaction for over €1 billion in new power generation that will create employment and exports from Kosovo. That project was started many years ago, but as complex negotiations draw to a close it will become a pillar of a new stage of economic development.

Today, Kosovo is the country with the highest average economic growth in the Western Balkans in the past seven years, and with the lowest debt-to-gross domestic product ratio in all of Eastern Europe. Yet while continuing to face enormous challenges, we are bravely seeking to translate our political freedom into greater economic opportunity for all the people of Kosovo.

Allow me to highlight the other key development that the Council has heard about today. Kosovo has applied for membership of UNESCO. We initially requested that New York transfer our application to UNESCO as the UNESCO secretariat had initially advised, but we understand that the United Nations does not want to play a role in exchanging correspondence and has left it to the UNESCO States members to decide the merits of Kosovo's membership. We have heard several questions posed here today. Allow me to answer a few of them.

Is Kosovo eligible to become a UNESCO member before becoming a United Nations Member? The answer is a resounding yes — Kosovo is eligible to become a UNESCO member before becoming a United Nations Member State, provided that it exerts its maximum effort to secure a two-thirds majority of the votes in the General Conference. The voting takes place upon the recommendation of the Executive Board. We will learn of the final outcome of the vote in November. Many countries, from Austria to Viet Nam, became members of UNESCO long before they joined the United Nations.

The second question is: Would Kosovo's membership of UNESCO endanger the ongoing dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on the normalization of relations? Kosovo is already a member of two United Nations specialized agencies: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. UNESCO would therefore not be the first agency or organization that Kosovo has joined since the initiation of the technical dialogue with Serbia in March 2011. Despite Serbia's claims, Kosovo's membership of international bodies will only advance stability and strengthen the dialogue for normalization. The continued isolation of Kosovo will certainly not promote normalization between Kosovo and Serbia. Beyond that, Serbia's attempt to block Kosovo's membership is completely at odds with the agreement signed in Brussels in April by Kosovo and Serbia, as represented by Mr. Dačić and myself.

Thirdly, I must answer the question about the safety of the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Kosovo. I can confirm in all conviction that they are safe — indeed, safer than they have been at any time in the past 1,000 years. They are protected by a very consolidated and modern legal framework approved by United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, endorsed by the Secretary-General and adopted by the Kosovo Parliament. Our local police authorities protect 95 per cent of the sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church. NATO forces have entrusted us and are satisfied with the safety of the sites. Thousands of tourists, from Japan to Rwanda, are visiting the sites today and they provide good income for the people of Kosovo. I invite Council members to visit Kosovo as soon as possible to witness, themselves, the positive and safe situation. Our Government has also engaged in interfaith dialogue, which the Secretary-General has characterized in several of his reports as a positive contribution to reconciliation.

I address the issues related to our UNESCO bid at length because we are gravely concerned over Serbia's methods as it seeks to deny our membership and keep us isolated from opportunities in education, science and culture. Serbia's ambassador to UNESCO, Darko Tanasković, was recently interviewed by a Russian radio station, where he called for a "wider Christian front" against Kosovo's membership. That language completely inappropriately calls for clashes between faiths and has clear racist undertones. The Kosovo war was not a religious conflict. It was a genocide committed by the State of Serbia against the people of Kosovo. It destroyed lives in three countries and led to three different armed conflicts, as well as to the genocides in Croatia, Srebrenica and Kosovo that were directly committed by the State of Serbia.

We expect to have a clash of arguments with Serbia on the merits of our membership, but we refuse to engage in a lowly and unacceptable discourse that promotes discord between religions and increases religious intolerance. We call on all members of the Security Council to support Kosovo's bid to UNESCO membership. Council members can do so even without having yet recognized Kosovo. We will also seek and are working intensively towards and deserve membership of INTERPOL and the Council of Europe, two vital tools to promote and protect human rights and human lives.

I have heard some harsh words on the part of Minister Dačić today. I understand that he is taking part in an election campaign in his country and may therefore need to use nationalist language, but the dialogue with Serbia has continued and is continuing to ensure the normalization of relations in the context of the European integration process.

Next week, Kosovo and Serbia will again meet in Brussels and I hope that we will agree to conclude a package of important agreements. The first agreement, regarding telecommunications, will ensure that Kosovo obtains an independent international dialing code, which will save millions of euros as we currently use Monegasque, Serbian and Slovenian codes. The second agreement, on energy, is meant to definitively stop the parallel distribution system in northern Kosovo that was set up by Serbia. Kosovo law will now prevail in creating a competitive distribution market in the entire territory of Kosovo and taxes to Kosovar authorities will be finally paid. The third deal will ensure that a barricade constructed in the north, which is called a

"peace park", will no longer hamper the freedom of movement. The fourth deal is expected to establish the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities envisaged in the Ahtisaari plan. I assure the Council that the association will not have executive powers.

We have a highly decentralized municipal Government that will form the basis of our civic democracy. We hope to sign those deals next week so that the leaders of the Western Balkans can meet in Vienna for the next summit of our nations in the context of the Berlin Process. All leaders of the Western Balkans will meet and discuss practical forms of cooperation, either through joint infrastructure investments, youth-to-youth exchanges or the demarcation of borders. Kosovo will continue to play a role in several key processes, including the promotion, with Serbia, of a new highway that will link Serbia with the Albanian and Montenegrin coast via Kosovo highways. The so-called Pristina-Nis project will connect important parts of the Balkans. In the coming days, Kosovo will also sign a border demarcation agreement with Montenegro, which will soon become a NATO member. Kosovo will thereby complete demarcation of three quarters of its borders, the most of any country of the former Yugoslavia. No other republic has managed to resolve such painful challenges with its neighbours, as we have done.

The decision of the Russian Federation to allow Kosovar sportsmen to use Kosovar passports when travelling to Russia will also help improve the movement of Kosovars. Brazil also recently allowed all Kosovars to use their passports when travelling to Brazil. As Kosovo recently became an Olympic nation, that is a welcomed move in the lead-up to the Games in Rio de Janeiro. We hope our world judo champion, the Kosovar athlete Majlinda Kelmendi, will win our first gold medal there.

In conclusion, allow me to call on you, Mr. President, and members of the Council to recognize the progress achieved. Are there still problems in Kosovo? Yes, there are, as there are in each of the former Yugoslav republics in our region. But is Kosovo safe today? Yes, according to INTERPOL statistics, it is safer than 80 per cent of other European capitals. We are combating extremism, and we are a champion in the region in that regard. We are cooperating with the international community. We are part of an anti-corruption coalition. We are trying to build a prosperous democracy.

I know that still more needs to be done, but as someone who witnessed war for himself, members of the Council should be proud of themselves for the success in Kosovo. That is why the mandate of the next Special Representative of the Secretary-General should include serious discussions on how the Council can transfer the resources spent in calm Kosovo to the people in the Middle East and elsewhere, who today are facing the direst existential threats.

Kosovo is working on its aspirations to be a member of the European Union, NATO and the United Nations very soon.

Before I conclude my remarks, please allow me to respond to several issues that Mr. Dačić mentioned here. I would like an opportunity to reply to them before this organ.

Mr. Dačić began his election campaign today from the floor of the Security Council. I would like to remind him, however, that according to Kosovo itself and according to our relations, the issue of Kosovo is the eighth or ninth most important issue to the people of Kosovo. The most important issues for the people of Kosovo are terrorism, corruption, non-respect of minorities, the creation of a legal State and others.

Mr. Dačić mentioned that he was born in Kosovo. That is true. Kosovo, with its constitution that is in accordance with Martti Ahtisaari's document, offers dual citizenship, and I have offered dual citizenship to Mr. Dačić. He is welcome to take up that offer. He was born in Kosovo, but his family actually came to Kosovo as colonizers between the two World Wars.

I would also like to refer to the propagandistic brochure that was disseminated here in the Security Council. That is a desperate and unfortunate act. The crimes that were sponsored and committed by the State of Serbia happened in the global spotlight.

Not enough words suffice to express the crimes and genocide that Serbia committed throughout Kosovo, again citing the genocides in Croatia, Srebrenica and Kosovo. What Mr. Dačić is attempting to do today is again unfortunate and desperate. The images that he has brought here does not change the fact that Kosovo will continue to be a champion in the war on extremism and fundamentalism. He knows that his own intelligence services created the graffiti that he referred to. The intelligence services were installed as parallel

institutions in Kosovo and have been working against Kosovo using the old ways.

In Kosovo alone, the political and military machines of the State of Serbia have destroyed over 300 religious sites. Serbia burned half of Kosovo from 1998 to 1999. Serbia removed more than a million citizens of Kosovo from the country. Serbia committed ethnic cleansing and killed 15,000 people as the State of Serbia. Serbia has committed genocide. And more than that, it has destroyed lives. Serbia has killed women, the elderly, destroyed people's lives, raped women. Serbia committed genocide in Kosovo and it will be taken to suit for that issue. Once and for all, I must say Kosovo will not obtain Serbia's permission on any issue. It is now a sovereign country.

Albanians were always the majority in Kosovo. History cannot be rewritten by political and propagandist brochures and materials. The citizens of Kosovo can live in their homes and communities irrespective of their ethnicity — the Serbs, the Montenegrins all the other communities. I am one of the leaders who has continually worked in that direction. I have visited minority families and I have worked with minority Government officials for the past 16 years. Mr. Dačić must understand one thing: the Serbian army and police and the Serbian Administration will never return. His dream has ended once and for all. Serbia can continue the war. That is its practice. It is used to that. But Serbia will lose again.

**The President**: I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Meek** (United Kingdom): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his final briefing. I am sure others will join me in paying tribute to all his hard work on Kosovo and his determination to improve the lives of all of Kosovo's citizens. We wish him every success in his new role. I also want to welcome Deputy Prime Ministers Dačić and Thaçi back to the Security Council again.

Let me start by reiterating our well-known position on the frequency of these meetings. We strongly believe the frequency should be reduced. Although many challenges remain, Kosovo's progress and its trajectory are undeniable. The reality, as described clearly in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/579), does not justify this level of the Council's attention. We also believe strongly that this meeting should not provide a platform to revisit nationalist positions that are unhelpful and not in keeping with the spirit of a dialogue. The report, although it shows that Kosovo faces significant challenges, also presents clear evidence of continuing steady progress. That is a welcome trend. The security situation remains generally stable, illegal migration is falling and we continue to see good practical cooperation at the local level, most notably in northern Kosovo.

The most important development since the Council last met to discuss Kosovo (see S/PV.7448) took place after the release of the Secretary-General's latest report: the positive vote on the specialist court. Although the delay on that issue was disappointing, we welcome that important step forward. Dealing with the past, no matter how difficult, controversial or painful, is vital if Kosovo is to tackle impunity and build respect for the rule of law. The vote in favour of the specialist court was also an important demonstration of Kosovo leaders' commitment to implement international agreements. That was a difficult decision that equired political courage, and we recognize the positive actions taken by Deputy Prime Minister Thaçi and Kosovo's Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament to ensure that it passed. But more hard work will be needed before the court is established and operational. Sustained effort will be required to ensure accountability in the wake of the allegations in the Marty report. Comprehensive, robust witness-protection programmes must be a key part of that process if the court is to be effective. As a matter of urgency, we hope Kosovo's leaders will take the necessary steps and work with all partners to ensure that the court is established as soon as possible.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights some wider concerns about the rule of law. In particular, the Government of Kosovo must address the weaknesses of the Kosovo judiciary and improve its ability to handle sensitive cases. The report also makes clear the valuable role the Kosovo police plays in maintaining order and protecting all communities from violence. That is welcome, and we hope that the cooperation shown by the police and the Kosovo Serb community in Klina can be replicated elsewhere. The arrests of five people in connection with suspicious activity at Badovac reservoir highlights the need for continued vigilance, particularly regarding the threat posed by terrorism and returning foreign fighters.

Turning to the dialogue facilitated by the European Union, we welcome the continued engagement of both

sides. The dialogue process remains the most effective means of normalizing relations in the Western Balkans. It is vital to the future stability and prosperity of the region, and the surest way to preventing any return to the violence of the past. Both sides must demonstrate and deliver the benefits of the dialogue for all their citizens. The pace of the implementation of dialogue agreements should be increased, and it is vital that new agreements be reached, including on the association of Serb municipalities, at the next meeting later this month.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to remark on the very clear and welcome leadership shown by the President of Kosovo in addressing the legacy of sexual violence in conflict. It is important to bring the perpetrators of those despicable crimes to justice, whoever they are and wherever they live. My Prime Minister's special representative on the issue, Baroness Anelay, saw that first-hand during her visit to Kosovo in July, when she pledged further United Kingdom support for rehabilitation programmes for survivors. Taking action on sexual volence is another example of the willingness of Kosovo's leaders to confront the difficult issues of the past and secure a better future for all their citizens. I hope they will continue that approach in the coming months and in doing so take the necessary steps to also ensure progress on the specialist court and the dialogue.

**Mr. Gasso Matoses** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the latest quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/579) on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), as well as to join my colleagues in taking this opportunity to express our gratitude to him for all his efforts over the past few years as Head of UNMIK, and to wish him all the best with his duties in future. I would also like to thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

During the previous debate on this subject, in May (see S/PV.7448), Spain expressed its support for a specialist court and called for its establishment as soon as possible. We would therefore like to congratulate those involved on passing the necessary legal amendments so that the court can be set up and undertake its functions. Now that that is in place, it is vital that the Kosovo authorities demonstrate that their commitment to the principles of accountability, the rule of law, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence for every community in Kosovo is a reality.

In that previous debate my delegation also expressed our concern about the violent events we had witnessed that same month, just before our meeting, and the possible negative effects they might have in Kosovo. In that regard, we noted with concern the details in the report at the time (S/2015/303) about the involvement of people with public responsibilities and representatives of political parties in ways that at the least supported the actions of others in those violent events. The authorities and political parties in Pristina must demonstrate by their actions that they have the political will to support peaceful coexistence between communities and an ongoing commitment to reconciliation and stability in the region.

We have noted with satisfaction the continuing dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the High Representative of the European Union, and the progress that has been made in recent months. However, it is essential that we continue to make further and more robust headway in implementing the agreements that have now been reached. In that regard, the Security Council has made specific and repeated calls for the effective establishment and launch of an association of Serb municipalities. That is critical, and Spain once again reiterates its call for that to be done.

Fulfilling that commitment is the cornerstone for assessing the seriousness and political will of the various stakeholders and the progress that has been made, all of which has an unquestionable reflection on the current security and stability situation in Kosovo. We welcome the information in the Secretary-General's most recent report on the fact that the situation is generally stable across the board. However, we are concerned about the fact that this claim contrasts with citations of a number of situations that make it clear that this stability is still fragile. In that context, we take a very positive view of the significant role that UNMIK still has to play, particularly through the concrete steps it has taken to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation in Kosovo. Spain therefore urges all the political actors involved to continue to collaborate and cooperate with UNMIK in that role.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that Spain will continue its constructive support without prejudice

to its position of principle, and we hope that Kosovo's regional and international stakeholders will do so too.

**Mr. Méndez Graterol** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing and to recognize his efforts in carrying out his important responsibilities in the past few years. We congratulate Mr. Zahir Tanin on his appointment to replace Mr. Zarif and wish him every success in his new role. We also welcome the fact that at this meeting we are hearing directly from the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and from Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to emphasize once again that the resolution 1244 (1999) is still the international judicial basis in force for achieving a solution within the context of the political negotiations on the future of Kosovo, conducted with respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Serbia. We reiterate our support for the implementation of the 19 April 2013 First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina. We have always stressed the importance of the Brussels dialogue between Serbia and the local and provincial authorities in Kosovo in which both parties are working to arrive at a mutually agreed-on settlement. The results include the integration of the judiciary and civilian protection personnel, the creation of new administrative boundary line crossing points and the harmonization of vehicle insurance policies. Other key issues are the establishment of an association of Serb municipalities, the Interministerial Commission for Return and implementation of the strategic objectives outlined by the Minister for Communities and Return. In that regard, the return of Serb Kosovan citizens should be facilitated by ensuring an atmosphere of security, ethnic and religious tolerance and respect for their economic and property rights, as well as for their freedom of movement.

Promoting and respecting human rights in Kosovo requires the full implementation of the relevant international norms to prevent discrimination of minorities and displaced persons. Although the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/579) refers to a slight decrease in incidents related to religious sites as compared the report of the previous quarter (S/2015/303), parties must work with determination to avoid situations of this kind, which have an impact on reconciliation among the different communities living in Kosovo.

Cooperation among local leaders, especially between the mayors of North and South Mitrovica, is a positive element in strengthening relations among the various communities. That serves to illustrate once again that citizens constitute a key element in generating trust, and we therefore welcome initiatives in the regard. The reconciliatiaon process also requires the continues work of the Working Group on Missing Persons, with a view to clarifying the fate of the thousands who went missing during the conflict.

We welcome the fact that the necessary measures have been adopted to set up the specialist court responsible for investigating accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity that were said to have been committed during the armed conflict in Kosovo. We hope that that court can be begin its work without any further delay. There can be no impunity for such crimes, and delivering justice is a positive step in achieving peace and reconciliation.

We note with satisfaction the efforts made with the support of the European Union as part of the second Rule of Law Compact, in order to resolve problems of accountability, corruption, crimes committed against ethnic groups, organized crime, gender discrimination, discrimination based on the grounds of ethnicity, developing a sytem for the protection of witnesses and pending claims regarding property.

The United Nations has played a fundamental role in Kosovo, especially through UNMIK by promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. That work has been complemented through the cooperation mechanism of the international security force in Kosovo and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. We believe that each of those missions — based on their respective mandates — should continue to play a proactive, complementary role with a view to finding a sustainable, just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Kosovo. For, as we have pointed out, direct dialogue among the parties is essential.

We believe that there must be support for the process of voluntary returns of Serbs displaced from their homes in Kosovo, with strict adherence to the

Brussels agreement of 2013. It is noteworthy that the report indicates that the rate of returns has continued to decrease — a trend we hope will be reversed. We welcome the establishment of the Interministerial Commission for Return and the implementation of the strategic objectives as established by the Ministry for Communities and Return.

In line with our established position, our country condemns and categorically rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We note with concern the growing radicalization of young people and the increase in extremism, which has led to the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters in countries of the Middle East and Africa. We therefore urge the systematic, concrete continuation of the efforts begun in Kosovo to combat this scourge, while also addressing the root causes.

In conclusion, we once again call on all parties to redouble their efforts in the search for a peaceful, just and lasting political solution within the framework of international law, including full observance of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels agreements of 2013.

**Mr. Ibrahim** (Malaysia): I thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, and thanks them both for their statements.

Malaysia takes note of the overall stable security situation in Kosovo during the reporting period. We welcome the positive developments in Kosovo, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/579) and by Mr. Zarif. In particular, we commend the adoption of the constitutional amendment and legislation by the Kosovo Assembly to establish a specialist court to try cases arising from the findings of the European Union (EU) Special Investigative Task Force. We view that development as an important step for Kosovo in ensuring accountability and promoting reconciliation and closure among the communities in Kosovo. We are also pleased with the progress made towards EU integration with the recent approval by the European Commission of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo. We believe that will pave the way for social and economic development and reforms as well as the rule of law — all of which are vital for the long-term stability of Kosovo.

Other positive developments have also been made by Belgrade and Priština in implementing the 2013 Brussels agreement during the reporting period, including on the integration of the judiciary and civil protection personnel and the establishment of association of Serb-majority municipalities.

We hope the parties will remain steadfast in their commitment to implement the Brussels agreement and intensify their high-level engagement in the EU-facilitated dialogue. We believe today's exchanges could have been much more productive if they had not revisited nationalistic narratives. In the spirit of reconciliation, we urge both sides to move forward to ensure stability for the region and a common space for both communities.

Malaysia strongly supports efforts to counter violent terrorism. In that regard, we commend the commitment shown by Kosovo to combat radicalization and extremism, as illustrated by its hosting of International Interfaith Conference in Priština in June and by its high-level participation in the first regional summit on countering violent extremism in Tirana last May. Such efforts could build on the climate of trust, confidence and harmony among the various ethnicities and religions. Malaysia encourages further steps to build bridges within the various communities and will remain committed in supporting Kosovo to to that end.

In conclusion, I join my other colleagues in reaffirming support for UNMIK, which continues to play a key role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We also commend the role of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in the continued strengthening of the Kosovo's rule-olaw and judicial institutions. In view of his new portfolio, my delegation would like to convey our utmost appreciation to Mr. Zarif for his dedication and contribution as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK for the past four years. Malaysia welcomes his newly appointed successor, Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan, and looks forward to working closely with him to support the work of UNMIK.

**Mr. Mangaral** (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to first thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in

Kosovo (UNMIK). We commend him on his devotion and commitment during his leadership of UNMIK, and we wish him our best in his future endeavours. I would like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, and thank them both for their statements.

Chad notes with satisfaction recent progress made in Kosovo in the political and legislative spheres as well as in terms of regional cooperation. We encourage the follow-up of high-level technical and political negotiations between Belgrade and Priština — under the auspices of the European Union — on issues concerning telecommunications, energy and the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, with the aim of forging long-lasting ties between the two parties.

The signing of the second Compact on Rule of Law in Kosovo will allow us to make progress on issues of responsibility, corruption, inter-ethnic crime, organized crime, gender issues, ethnic inclusion, strengthening the witness-protection system and pending land issues. That is an important step in institution-building. We welcome the effective cooperation between local leaders in northern Kosovo, especially between the majors of North and South Mitrovica on issues relating to budget and the payment of salaries to health care and education workers. We also welcome the verdicts handed down in the Drenica I and II war crimes cases.

Given the transnational challenges, particularly those related to the radicalization of young people and violent extremism, Chad encourages the Kosovo authorities in their struggle against socioeconomic factors that could lead to recruitment by radical groups. We believe that as Kosovo experienced one of the most devastating wars in Europe, work on justice towards reconciliation and confidence-building within communities and societies of the region remains a priority. To that end, we welcome the adoption on 3 August by the Assembly of Kosovo of constitutional amendments for the establishment of a specialist court to try cases referred by the European Union Special Investigative Task Force in the context of war crimes and organized crime allegations contained in the report of January 2011 presented by Dick Marty.

With regard to the issue of returns, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recorded only 132 individual voluntary returns in the reporting period. The proposals and initiatives to build homes in return areas and to validate diplomas so as to allow people from non-majority groups to find employment in public institutions could certainly facilitate local returns. With respect to the 1,654 persons still missing, Chad calls on the Kosovo authorities to redouble their efforts to foster conditions conducive to ongoing investigations and provide follow-up to the victims' families.

With respect to regional cooperation, important steps have been taken in the context of security and promoting reconciliation. However, we regret and condemn acts of violence, particularly the clashes that took place on 9 and 10 May in Kumanovo, in the the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, leading to the deaths of 8 police officers and the wounding of 37 others. We welcome the cooperation of the Kosovo police in facilitating the conduct of an open investigation into these incidents with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice. We also welcome the State visit of the Serbian Prime Minister to Albania, which allowed discussions to be launched on joint infrastructure, socioeconomic development and security projects. We believe that the adoption by the Assembly of a resolution on the geographic delineation of the border with Montenegro will also help to improve the climate of regional understanding.

In conclusion, Chad is convinced that all these productive and constructive initiatives will help to improve the daily lives of citizens in Kosovo and reduce tensions for the benefit of all communities there. That progress has been achieved thanks to the readiness of the parties and the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, Mr. Zarif, and his entire team. Chad commends and encourages UNMIK to continue to support initiatives for dialogue between the communities, in particular through capacity-building projects. We also commend the United Nations entities and the system's partners on the ground — particularly the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union — for their cooperation and contributions to reconciliation and stabilization in Kosovo.

**Ms. Murmokaitė** (Lithuania): I thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Hashim Thaçi of

Kosovo for their statements. I also thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his briefing. Let me express our appreciation for his dedicated service at the helm of UNMIK and wish him every success in his new appointment as Special Representative for Liberia. I also wish our colleague Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan every success in his new job as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo.

We reiterate our support for the continued efforts of the European Union (EU) in facilitating the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. Some concrete steps have already been taken in implementing the 19 April 2013 First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, including on the integration of judiciary and civil protection personnel. Issues of energy, telecoms, the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, freedom of movement and the Mitrovica bridge continue to be the focus of the discussions in the framework of the dialogue.

We welcome the progress achieved on the texts on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities and on the implementation arrangements in the field of telecoms, and encourage the parties to demonstrate political will and engage constructively in reaching final political agreement on these and on other remaining matters, so necessary for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Such normalization would first and foremost benefit the peoples of Kosovo and Serbia, with the mutual recognition of diplomas, the insurance of vehicles and freedom of movement being just a few of the concrete advantages that this would bring. We welcome the the memorandum of understanding on the mutual recognition of vehicle insurance policies, signed on the margins of the most recent EU-facilitated high-level meeting. The practical cooperation between the mayors of Mitrovicaon steps taken to facilitate returns is yet another sign of progress.

Like other delegations today, we welcome the adoption by the Assembly of Kosovo and signature by the President of the constitutiona! amendments and the law on the specialist court and the specialist prosecutor's office to try cases arising from the findings of the Special Investigative Task Force. We encourage the establishment of the specialist court with a mechanism for witness protection and hope to ensure that it will become operational at the earliest possibility.

We reiterate our support for the European integration efforts of both Kosovo and Serbia. The path of integration requires the constant and dedicated implementation of reforms. The EU's long-standing engagement is a clear demonstration of its firm commitment to the countries of the region. We expect a swift signature of the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo. It would strengthen EU-Kosovo relations and continue to provide a solid framework for the necessary social and economic reforms. We welcome the measures taken by the Kosovar authorities to address the issue of violent extremism and note that these efforts could be reinforced through strengthened cooperation among the countries of the region. While the security situation has remained calm, we note the continued role played by the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo in ensuring security and consolidating the rule of law.

Finally, acknowledging progress in the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and the stability in Kosovo, like our colleague from the United Kingdom, we reiterate our view that such progress should lead to reducing the frequency of UNMIK debates in the Council, also given the large and growing number of truly critical peace and security situations the Council has to tackle every day.

**Mr. Hmoud** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I too wish to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his in-depth briefing and for all his efforts over the past few years. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

I welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, and thank them both for their statements.

Jordan attaches great importance to the significant progress that has been made by the Government of Kosovo to honour its commitment to delivering stability and advancing towards regional integration. We would like to express our satisfaction with the progress being made on more than one front, in particular with regard to the amendments adopted by the Kosovo Assembly to pave the way for the establishment for a specialist court on war crimes — an issue towards which the European Union Task Force has been working in order to establish

accountability. We welcome that step to ensure the rule of law in the nation.

We call for all steps to be taken to protect religious minorities in Kosovo, including their property and goods, as well as steps to preserve the cultural heritage and religious sites in Kosovo. We call upon the Kosovo authorities to bring to justice all those who have perpetrated abuses against minorities or threatened the cultural heritage. It is essential to deliver on that in order to ensure that perpetrators do not enjoy impunity.

Meeting internal and security and political challenges in Kosovo will require the support of the international community, which must guarantee peace and stability in the country as well as in the countries of the region. We therefore express our support for the ongoing efforts to ensure that there is further agreement and better relations among all ethnic and other minorities in Kosovo. We must continue the economic and political reform programme, as well as to deliver on the development programme. We would like to emphasize the need to resolve issues relating to cadastres, border demarcation and missing persons, including also facilitating the return of the displaced. Such returns have dropped off considerably over the past few months. We must ensure that it increases and that those who do return can fully reintegrate into society.

We welcome the progress achieved by both Kosovo and Serbia as they seek to continue dialogue at all levels. We call upon them to redouble their efforts to ensure that relations between both countries can be strengthened and to expand the space for political consulation and dialogue between the two countries so that progress can be made on points of common interest. The goal should be to ensure that relations between Kosovo and Serbia can be normalized. We also call on both sides to ensure that the bilateral agreements reached thus far can be fully implemented.

We also believe that the support of the countries of the broader Balkan region is essential in order to ensure better peace and security in the region and a whole. All countries of the region have a common political interest in ensuring peace and stability while building on historical ties. We are aware that there have been obstacles in the way that have prevented such friendly ties at the broader regional level. However, making progress in that regard is the only way to break the cycle of violence and conflict. There is therefore a need for support to Kosovo and Serbia from their neighbours in order to open a new chapter in their history, one that paves the way towards development and prosperity in future.

It is essential that we establish a development and security partnership for the Balkan region in order to guarantee integration and peace. That can be achieved only with the support of the international community and of the broader region. Europe in particular has a special role, as it has the necessary capacity and diplomatic tools required to ensure that an agreement is reached between the various officials and countries in the Balkans. Given the well-known history of conflict in the region, perhaps the parties can learn from the model of the broader continent, where differences have been put aside.

We welcome the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Serbia, which is a key step towards stability, as well as for the stability of Kosovo — should such an agreement be signed with that country as well, setting on a pather towards joining the European Union.

Jordan, which has recognized Kosovo as an independent, sovereign State, calls upon the international community to follow in our steps and do likewise. We also call upon the international community to allow Kosovo to join all international organizations and all agencies of the United Nations as an independent, sovereign country. That would allow the country to build a brighter future and pursue the path of political maturity, economic growht and social development, and put it in a better position to achieve lasting peace.

In conclusion, we would like to express our gratitude to UNMIK and all its staff for their considerable and commendable efforts and positive contributions to ensuring peace and security. We also commend the Head of Mission and his team for their professional attitude and dedication to achieve UNMIK's goals.

**Mr. Wang Min** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his briefing. I welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, to attend today's meeting. China also listened carefully to the statement made by Mr. Thaçi.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understands the legitimate concerns of Serbia on the question of Kosovo. China believes that the best way to solve the question of Kosovo is to work out an appropriate solution acceptable to all the parties concerned through dialogue and negotiation, on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in the framework of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The current situation in Kosovo by and large continues to be stable, but still faces complex issues. China appreciates the vigorous efforts made by the Serbian Government to find a political solution to the Kosovo issue, and welcomes the fact that Belgrade and Pristina have recently continued to hold high-level talks. China supports the efforts by both parties to continue to pursue pragmatic and constructive dialogue in order to implement the existing agreements and to effectively protect the rights and interests of different ethnicities in Kosovo. The parties must continue their efforts to resolve their differences through dialogue and avoid any actions that may lead to further complicating or escalating the situation. Doing that would be conducive to the maintenance of peace and security in the Balkans and throughout Europe.

China commends the work being done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) over the past four years under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif and supports UNMIK's continuing efforts to implement the Council's mandate under the leadership of the new Special Representative, Ambassador Tanin. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force will carry out the tasks assigned under their respective mandates and strengthen their coordination and cooperation in order to play a constructive role in finding an appropriate settlement of the question of Kosovo.

**Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the current situation in Kosovo. We also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

Although the security situation in the region has been said to be stable, we are seeing with concern violent incidents such as those that took place in Kumanovo, which could have destabilizing effects on reconciliation and regional cooperation. It is imperative to safeguard and expand elements for coexistence and to avoid acts that may endanger people's lives and relations between the different communities. We welcome the role played by the European Union in facilitating technical and high-level negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade, which are contributing to fomenting trust between the parties.

By way of our own long and painful experience, we have learned that for the sake of society, but especially for victims and their families, reconciliation genuinely requires justice and reparations. The establishment of a specialist court tasked with adjudicating the crimes committed during the conflict represents a step in that direction that will make it possible to apply the fundamental principles of justice and accountability. Likewise, knowing the whereabouts of persons who disappeared during the conflict is necessary to making progress towards justice and the truth. Moreover, it is the right of the families and must be addressed by the respective authorities. The designation of a new Chair of the Working Group on Missing Persons will be critical when the time comes to begin search efforts and identify reparation measures

As we have done in the Council on other occasions, we stress the central role that UNMIK continues to play in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights — a priority matter for moving forward in the process of reconciliation among the communities. Only in a context of respect for, and protection of, basic human rights is it possible to aspire to reconciliation and to a peaceful future.

With regard to the complaints of human rights violations allegedly committed by UNMIK between June 1999 and February 2008, the investigation undertaken by the UNMIK Human Rights Advisory Panel contributed to clarifying the facts. However, paragraph 59 of the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/579) makes clear that UNMIK did not act in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. It is vital to compensate the victims of those violations for the moral damage they incurred.

With regard to the implementation of resolution 1325 (1999), we stress the actions that have been taken to promote and protect the rights of women and gender equality. However, we believe it is necessary

to continue to work on activities that will enhance women's participation, on an equal footing with men, with respect to access to property and education, among other things. It is equally important to continue to adopt measures to integrate young people by addressing the socioeconomic factors that lead to an increase in recruitment activities by extremist groups.

I would like to underscore that resolution 1244 (1999) remains in full force as the internationally accepted legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo, including strict respect for the principle of territorial integrity.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for the work of Mr. Zarif as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, including his efforts to promote peace and stability in Kosovo and the region throughout his tenure. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

**Mr. Stehelein** (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for presenting the report (S/2015/579). I also thank the Foreign Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, Mr. Dačić and Mr. Thaçi, respectively, for their statements. I would also like to express our deepest gratitude to Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whom we heard today for the last time in his current functions, for the work he accomplished during his term. Finally, on behalf of France, I would like to express our best wishes to his successor, Ambassador Tanin.

This year got off to a rocky start for Kosovo, but the new Government rose to the challenge. We welcome the adoption by the Parliament of Kosovo of constitutional amendments allowing for the establishment of a specialist court that will shed light on the allegations of war crimes set out in the Marty report that was presented to the Council of Europe in 2011 and that have been pursued by the Special Investigation Task Force. It is essential for that courageous decision by the Kosovo Parliament be followed up in all its dimensions. The resolution of this matter is crucial in order to demonstrate Kosovo's commitment to the fight against impunity and constitutes an essential milestone in the process of normalizing its relations with Serbia, which is particularly vital in the context of its rapprochement with Europe.

Another symbolic matter on which significant progress is awaited concerns the establish of an association of Serb municipalities in Kosovo, which is essential for the future of the Serb population of Kosovo. The statutory unity of Kosovo will in no way be called into question by the setting up of such a structure. Such a measure must not be subject to further delay, given that two years have already elapsed since the agreement was signed on 19 April 2013. We expect the authorities in Pristina to redouble their efforts to bring about that essential element of reconciliation with Belgrade. Those two processes are inseparable in order to strengthen the trust of the entire population in the institutional framework of Kosovo.

Political dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, initiated under the auspices of the European Union, regularly takes place at the highest level. We congratulate both parties for their unrelenting pursuit of dialogue, which confirms the hopes of their own peoples as well as of the international community. The progress so far has been slow but real. We would like in that regard to call on both parties to continue their exchange with a view to the future. It is not merely a question of working towards a formal normalization of relations, but also of building authentic long-term, mutually profitable relations as good neighbours.

In that regard, Kosovo's future also requires the consolidation of the rule of law. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our unwavering support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which works on a daily basis to support the rule of law and security in Kosovo. We call on Serbia to fully engage in the mechanism of mutual legal assistance established by EULEX, in a spirit of active cooperation. We also call on the Kosovar authorities, which aspire to UNESCO membership, to guarantee the protection of religious sites, in particular the monastery of Visoki Dečani. That is an absolutely fundamental requirement.

It would be remiss of me to conclude without invoking the European perspective, which recognizes the integrity of the Balkan countries as a whole. Over the course of the past several years, Serbia has made significant efforts to draw closer to the European Union, whether through internal reforms or by improving its relations with its neighbours. We congratulate them once again for those efforts, encourage them to pursue the full implementation of their existing agreements with Pristina and reiterate our wish to see them join the European Union as soon as possible, once the necessary conditions have been met. In that regard, we hope that a

first chapter in that negotiation process will be written this year.

We are aware of and support Kosovo's wish to follow the same path, which is equally necessary for the future of that country. We know that the Kosovar authorities are fully aware of the challenges. We reiterate our trust in them and our full support for their efforts, proof of which is the stabilization and association agreement due to be signed in the very near future.

Finally, along with other delegations, in the light of the progress made so far, which we tirelessly applaud every three months, we hope that the Council will at last reconsider the frequency with which it takes up this matter as a prelude to a comprehensive review of the entire set of international measures concerning Kosovo.

**Mr. Pressman** (United States of America): We welcome Foreign Ministers Thaçi and Dačić back to the Security Council. I commend both their countries on their continued dedication to the normalization of relations through the European-led dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. We believe that progress is indeed being made, even if the tone of parts of today's discussion did not evince it. Let us be clear. The hands extended by Serbia and Kosovo for reconciliation must be firmly grasped. The kind of nationalistic rhetoric we have heard in the Council today needs to end. It is wholly counterproductive. To that end, the United States agrees with other colleagues who, while recognizing that the situation in Kosovo remains an important matter for the Councils' attention, believe that the three-month reporting cycle has long outlived its usefulness. The Security Council should extend the reporting period for the Secretary-General to every six months.

I would also like to thank Special Representative Zarif for his briefing. We commend him for his service and dedication to Kosovo and wish him well in his next assignment, in Liberia. We welcome also the appointment of Ambassador Tanin as the next Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

The United States has been a champion of accountability throughout South-East Europe for the crimes committed during the Balkan wars. Our commitment has been to the principle of justice and accountability for all as an essential ingredient to sustainable peace. The last time the Security Council met to discuss Kosovo (see S/PV.7448), the United States made it clear that Kosovo must uphold its commitments to respond to allegations of serious crimes committed between 1998 and 2000, by adopting the legal measures required to set up a robust specialist court to adjudicate those cases. The allegations made by a few individuals must not be held against the legitimate aspirations and honour of the people of Kosovo. The best way to ensure this is to advance individual justice for the crimes that have been alleged. As a steadfast friend and supporter of the Republic of Kosovo, a sovereign, democratic and multi-ethnic State that exemplifies Euro-Atlantic values, we commend Kosovo's Government and Assembly for having passed the constitutional amendment and law to establish this specialist court, which will be able to issue indictments and try cases in connection with the evidentiary findings of the Special Investigative Task Force.

There are serious allegations contained in these findings, including of war crimes and other crimes against humanity, and they deserve serious judicial examination. Voting to establish this court was not easy politically; voting to advance accountability rarely is, but it is essential, and it was a major step forward in fulfilling Kosovo's international commitments and a clear demonstration of the commitment of the people of Kosovo to the values of human rights and the rule of law, values that we in the United States and our partners in the European Union and so many of us around this table hold dear.

We applaud Kosovo's leaders for their vision and ability to put politics aside for the future of their country. But the passage of this law is only the first step. The Government must quickly conclude the negotiations on a host State agreement with the European Union (EU) and the Netherlands so that the specialist court can indeed be established.

While Kosovo has worked diligently to improve its judicial structures, the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force continue to play indispensable roles in building security and rule-of-law capacity in the country. Kosovo's judicial institutions will continue to need support to handle highly complicated cases related to terrorism, war crimes, human rights abuses, sanctions and corruption.

As the end of EULEX's mandate nears, in 2016, consideration should be given to mechanisms for addressing outstanding cases and for continued support to Kosovo's judicial and law-enforcement institutions.

Increased coordination between EULEX and KFOR is more important now than ever.

As I mentioned at the outset, we have been encouraged to learn of progress towards normalization of relations through the EU-facilitated dialogue. The parties are closer than ever to resolving the outstanding issues, including the principles for establishing the association of Serb municipalities, energy, telecommunications and freedom of movement on Mitrovica bridge. We strongly encourage both sides to find compromises on the outstanding issues from the 2013 Brussels agreement and reach agreements that improve the lives of Kosovo residents regardless of their ethnicity. We look forward to a positive outcome in the next round of the dialogue, on 25 August. Compromise on these issues will indeed be difficult but remains essential to advancing the aspirations of both Kosovo and Serbia to further integrate into European and trans-Atlantic institutions.

We also commend both Serbia and Kosovo for their continued commitment to fighting terrorism and addressing the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. Both countries have worked to develop effective preventive and response mechanisms to counter violent extremism. We support efforts by both Serbian and Kosovo officials to find practical ways to cooperate on critical law-enforcement and counter-terrorism issues. To be effective, it is essential that international cooperation on counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism and law enforcement include all of the Balkans. That is why we fully support Kosovo's joining INTERPOL in the near term to enhance direct coordination between Kosovo and the international law-enforcement community.

In this vein, we repeat our call for all States Members of the United Nations to acknowledge the importance of Kosovo's membership in INTERPOL as a means to further facilitate law-enforcement cooperation on counter-terrorism and organized crime. It is in all of our interests to approve Kosovo's bid for membership at the INTERPOL General Assembly meeting in November. Isolating Kosovo from participation in the instruments of international cooperation on issues as important as this only handicaps our collective efforts.

We also fully support Kosovo's bid for membership in UNESCO. Kosovo's membership in UNESCO would reinforce the importance that the international community places on the World Heritage sites in Kosovo and the responsibilities of Kosovo authorities for preserving those sites. Based on the Vienna formula, Kosovo is eligible for membership in UNESCO as a result of being a member of two United Nations specialized agencies, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We believe that it is important and that all Member States should support Kosovo in this effort.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, and we share his sentiments.

We are grateful to Mr. Farid Zarif for the presentation of the report (S/2015/579) and for his many years of conscientious work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. We wish him every success in his new and important posting in Liberia.

Mr. Zarif's briefing and the statements we have heard have convinced us once again that the situation in Kosovo is far from stable and should remain under continuing international review. The statements made by Mr. Thaçi only confirm that there are still very major problems in the province linked, inter alia, to a genuine attitude towards reconciliation. The situation in the western Balkans as a whole remains turbulent. We have seen how easily ill-advised words and actions can reopen the long-standing wounds of old conflicts and also how failure to tackle the root causes are reflected in the contemporary realities of the region.

The Balkans face a number of serious challenges, including inter-ethnic and interreligious antagonisms, the surge in Islamist extremism and mass migration. In Kosovo, the situation is further complicated by socioeconomic problems and the increase in unemployment, which stands at 55 per cent among young people. That is why we deem it important not to drop our guard or ignore the consequences of the conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Many years have gone by, but the difficult repercussions of this European tragedy continue to rear their head, first of all with regard to the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons who still have not been able to return to their homes. This problem cannot be swept under the carpet.

Secondly, we are troubled by the resurgence in the activities of militant organizations such as the Kosovo Liberation Army and armed groups that were previously demilitarized in line with the universally adopted decisions of the Security Council. The incident that took place in Kumanovo in May exposed the serious shortcomings that exist in terms of control over cross-border movement by Kosovo criminal groups into neighbouring countries. This represents a failure, including on the part of the Kosovo Force.

Thirdly — and this thought was clearly expressed at today's meeting in the statements made by our partners — we must continue our efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of serious crimes. We must do so objectively and without any double standards.

After lengthy prevarication by Pristina, a decision was finally adopted that should pave the way for the creation of a specialist court to investigate the crimes committed by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, including the trafficking in human organs that was uncovered in the Marty report. Once again, the decision was adopted under great international pressure, and the result was achieved only after many months of arm-twisting. What does that say about so-called Kosovo statehood? There is no certainty at all that the mechanism being created in line with that will be effective and protected from sabotage tactics. Moreover, we are also troubled that the signing of the law to establish the specialist court has been deferred while the radical opposition attempts to challenge it. We will keep that under close review.

In any case, the perpetrators of crimes must be brought to account regardless of the office they now hold. We trust that the topic will be kept under full review by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the international community and Mr. Zahir Tanin when he heads the Mission. Moreover, we trust that they will draw on the records of Serbian structures, above all those of the Serbian special prosecutor on war crimes, in terms of their extensive evidence on the cases in question. That is a major issue.

Turning to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina under the mediation of the European Union, we are seriously troubled by the failure to fully address the main issue, which is the establishment of a community of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo, in step with the arrangements the parties agreed in 2013, whereby the Serb communities would be granted genuine powers designed to guarantee the survival of the Serb minority. The plight of the Kosovar Serbs in the province is also a serious concern. Violations of their rights continue, including incidents committed on an inter-ethnic basis and cases of desecration of Serbian Orthodox Church shrines. Kosovo is riven with corruption. Decisions taken in Kosovo judicial instances are of an increasingly political character.

An illustration of that is the situation concerning the property dispute between the Kosovar Albanian economic entities, which are supported by the municipal authorities, and the Visoki Dečani Monastery. In that case, the court found against the monastery. The illegitimate nature of the latest judicial decision was highlighted both by United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a very reputable decision. The verdict must be reviewed. It is being politicized and it is urgent that the review of that verdict take place.

Ensuring the security and protection of Serbian Orthodox monasteries and churches was and remains a fundamental obligation, duty and responsibility of the authorities in Pristina. What is happening with the monastery in Visoki Dečani, the Church of Saint Petka and other cathedrals is categorically unacceptable. Order must be brought to the situation. The situation must be addressed, including through the assistance of the international presence. The issue must receive special attention from the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

We are concerned at Pristina's continuing steps aimed at transforming the Kosovo security forces into a full-fledged armed forces. There is no doubt in this case that we are talking about a blatant violation of resolution 1244 (1999), which does not provide for the presence in the provincial territory of any armed groups other than the Kosovo Force and an agreed number of Serbian military personnel. The resolution stipulates clear requirements with regard to the demiliaritization of all Kosovar Albanian armed groups.

We need to continue our efforts to curb the participation of Kosovars in conflicts in the Middle East. Again, this consideration was clearly highlighted today in most of the statements made by the members of the Security Council, including mention of their recruitment by the Islamic State and other radical organizations. Local authorities acknowledge that, in

terms of numbers fighting in hotspots, Kosovo has the highest number in Europe of nationals per capita who are fighting in such groups. However, effectively combating that problem at an expert legislative level is something that the authorities have acknowledged that they are unable to do. We trust that the problem will stay in the field of vision of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and of other international presences, whose activities in the province must continue.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm our support to the activities of the Mission, which remain the main international presence in the province. Mr. Zarif has done a great deal to make the Mission perform at the highest level in implementing its commitments. The Mission must command all the necessary financial and personnel resources. We stress the importance of its neutral status, its conscientiousness and its proactive implementation of the mandates in the light of resolution 1244 (1999). We are certain that the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, will assume his new tasks with his characteristic sense of responsibility. We wish him every success. We call on the Kosovar Albanians to fully cooperate with the new Special Representative.

Russia's position on the issue of Kosovo remains unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force as the mandatory international legal basis for a resolution in Kosovo. No one is entitled to amend that resolution, or any other Security Council decision; and no one is entitled to ignore them. They must be mandatatorily implemented by all.

We support the current reporting cycle and frequency of reporting by the Secretary-General, because expanding it will not resolve the problems. We will simply see them pile up further. As seen in today's Council meeting, it appears that those problems remain very serious. The Council must regularly continue to keep under review what is happening in the province.

**Ms. Darlow** (New Zealand): Like others, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his briefing this morning and for his efforts over the past four years as the Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission (UNMIK) in Kosovo. I wish him well in his next role, and we look forward to working with his successor. I also welcome Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Mr. Thaçi to the meeting.

The last time the Council considered this agenda item (see S/PV.7448), we, like others, urged the Kosovo Assembly to take the remaining steps required in order to establish a specialist court to try cases arising from the European Union Special Investigative Task Force. We are therefore pleased to note that the Assembly recently voted to approve a constitutional amendment for the establishment of the specialist court. We warmly welcome that move, which we recognize was not easy. It demonstrates an important commitment, not only to justice and accountability but also, ultimately, to long-term reconciliation.

The decision of the Kosovo Assembly was an important step towards addressing the serious allegations that have been made, but it was of course just a first step. There remains much to do before the specialist court and associated prosecutor's office are established and functioning. Reaching that point will not be a simple process. We therefore urge all involved to build on the momentum of the decision of the Kosovo Assembly and to drive the process forward expeditiously.

In terms of the political situation, we welcome the continued high-level engagement between Belgrade and Pristina in the European Union-facilitated dialogue. We encourage both sides to approach the dialogue constructively. The more progress that is made in normalizing relations, the more flexibility will need to be shown by all leaders in order to address core issues. Particular attention is needed to resolve outstanding issues in northern Kosovo. Practical cooperation, such as that demonstrated by the mayors of South and North Mitrovica, helpfully contributes to the process. Beyond that, we encourage both sides to make progress on other issues identified in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/579), including the protection of cultural and religious sites, the issue of internally displaced persons and the question of missing persons.

Finally, with respect to the frequency with which the Council considers this agenda item, New Zealand echoes the words of others this morning and reiterates the comments we made during the Council's most recent discussion on Kosovo, regarding the organization of the Council's work. We are not convinced that the Council's current practice with respect to UNMIK is calibrated optimally. While it is important for the Council to hear from those affected by its decisions, we believe that there should be flexibility in how the Council monitors

the situation in Kosovo so that it can more appropriately reflect the situation on the ground.

**Mr. Casimiro** (Angola): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2015/579). We welcome the participation in today's briefing of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and thank him for his statement. We equally welcome Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

Angola reaffirms its position that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the applicable legal framework in efforts to reach a solution for Kosovo through dialogue and negotiation, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Council resolutions. We therefore support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understand the legitimate concerns of that country on the Kosovo issue.

We underline the fundamental role played by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the Kosovo region in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, its cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and its engagement with Pristina and Belgrade. We continue to note that the overall security situation in Kosovo remains calm and stable.

Concerning the general political environment, we value the ongoing Belgrade-Pristina high-level engagement in the European Union-facilitated dialogue, in particular the meeting in Brussels on 23 and 29 June under the auspices of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Addressing outstanding issues of implementation, including the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, is one of the main points of contention in terms of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations of 19 April 2013. We hope that a final political agreement can be reached soon.

We welcome the resumed participation of Kosovo Serb representatives from the Serbian Civic Initiative in the Kosovo Government and Assembly after an absence of two months, enabling the governing coalition to promote its extensive legislative programme. We regret the failure of the Assembly of Kosovo to approve a constitutional amendment on the establishment of a specialist court for the prosecution of war crimes committed during the Kosovo war.

Concerning human rights, we welcome the organization on 21 and 22 April of a conference on the implementation of a legal framework on the protection of the rights of women and gender equality, which took place in Pristina. We also welcome the adoption on 28 May by the Assembly of Kosovo, with assistance from the OSCE, of the human rights law package, comprising new laws on gender equality, anti-discrimination and the Ombudsperson institution, as well as amendments to laws on the composition and functions of the judiciary and the Kosovo strategy on property rights.

We are deeply concerned over youth radicalization, violent extremism and other transnational challenges affecting the Kosovo region. We call on the authorities to adopt and implement energetic measures and policies to counter such negative and dangerous trends.

Finally, we commend the continued active role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in facilitating dialogue among communities and officials and with international organizations, particularly those focused on efforts aimed at preventing and reducing tensions and promoting cooperation among local authorities. We value the work carried out by UNMIK under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, in the promotion of security, stability, rule of law and respect for human rights, in accordance with the Mission's mandate.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

First, I want to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia. I thank him for sharing his perspectives with the Council. I also thank Mr. Hashim Thaçi for his statement.

I want to thank in particular Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his insightful briefing on recent developments in Kosovo. We are in his great debt for the dedication and sprit of perseverance that he has demonstrated in fulfilling his mission. While we wish him well in his next assignment, we welcome very warmly our colleague Mr. Tanin, as his worthy successor in Kosovo.

We believe that when Belgrade and Pristina endorsed the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations on 19 April 2013, the stage was set for a visible and sustainable improvement of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Today, we are encouraged by the continuation of the technical and high-level dialogue between the parties in addressing the outstanding issues related to the Agreement.

There is, however, a risk of reversing the gains achieved thus far in peaceful intercommunity relations if the parties are unable to achieve consensus in implementing its outstanding provisions. The conflicting interpretations by both sides on the issue of the formation of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities constitutes an obstacle to the full implementation of the agreement. That is why we underscore the need for the parties not only to exercise flexibility, but also to remain steadfast in their commitment to the process.

It is significant that the technical talks between the parties in the framework of the customs agreement are witnessing continuing progress, with the support of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). The dialogue has been successful in reaching agreement for the opening of two interim border crossings by 2016. Through that mechanism, hitherto controlled goods, including much-needed medicines, will be transported freely across boundaries, thereby promoting increased commercial opportunities and providing relief to the sick.

The relationship between justice and reconciliation is another important dimension of Serbia-Kosovo relations. Let me emphasize the nexus between justice and reconciliation. There is an inextricable link between them. In ensuring that the success of reconciliation is complete, it is imperative that the families of the victims of the Kosovo and Metohija conflict receive justice. That is why, in our view, the establishment of a specialist court to try war crimes is an important and significant development. We expect that the findings of the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force concerning the inhumane treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs will lead to the prosecution of the perpetrators.

Genuine reconciliation remains crucial to strengthening cohesion and laying the foundation for peace and progress. The confidence-building projects embarked upon by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have been appropriately designed to achieve that objective. They are facilitating dialogue not only between faiths but also between cultures, and are already yielding tangible results. Let there be no doubt about the pivotal role of UNMIK in the promotion of security and stability in Kosovo — it cannot be ignored. UNMIK remains the bridge and the bridge-builder. We encourage the Mission and the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tanin, to be unrelenting in their quests for the achievement of the mandate in Kosovo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of Serbia has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Dačić** (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Please allow me briefly to respond to several statements we heard in various interventions. I am very surprised that some of the participants of at this meeting have said that we inserted nationalist rhetoric into the discussion. I simply raised the issue of Serbian cultural heritage, its protection and the devastation of our monuments — monuments tht date from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. That has nothing to do with nationalist rhetoric. What do members of the Council think? Should we applaud such acts of violence?

I am certain that we have the right to say something in our own defence. To everything that I have presented and demonstrated, Mr. Thaçi responded with the word "genocide". No, he first started with "fascism", "racism", "genocide", "rape" and "nationalist rhetoric". Those were the words he used. First of all — to the representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and France — in both World Wars Serbia and Yugoslavia were your allies and fought on your side in the coalition against fascism. We can never be on the fascist side. We fought against Albania in the First and Second World Wars. As members of the Council know, when it comes to Albania, after the World Wars Yugoslavia was an advocate of friendship between Enver Hoxha and Tito. Those allegations of genocide, racism and fascism are absurd. Mister Thaçi mentioned thousands of rapes. I am not against a court delivering a judgement against someone accused of allegedly committing a crime. But regarding that number, those thousands of rapes that were actually mentioned and

the alleged rapes of young men — Mr. Thaçi cannot apply double standards in regard to us.

I expect the great Powers to corroborate everything that we did in past centuries, and not remain silent in the wake of the accusations that we are facing — that we are fascists, engage in racial rhetoric, that we are rapists. I do not know what kind of words they are, but UNESCO proclaimed four sites under its protection to be in danger. From whom are they in danger? Not from our side. That is why we object to Kosovo's bid for membership in UNESCO.

Eight out of 15 countries here have recognized the independence of Kosovo, but I would like members to be circumspect and to refrain from calling other countries to recognize the independence of Kosovo. I listened to the statement made by the representative of Jordan, and I must say that Jordan has not had diplomatic relations with Israel because of Palestine. I hope that there will not come a time when its territorial integrity will be called into question, and then having to wait for everyone else to make a decision in regard to its territorial integrity. I hope Jordan will not experience that first-hand. We cannot applaud those and similar decisions.

We wish to have excellent relations with the United States of America, as we deem it to be of key importance for our future. But I would like to raise one question because the United States called on all Member States to support Kosovo's bid to UNESCO. Can I ask the United States of America, where were its principles when it asked Member States a couple of years ago not to vote for Palestine? I recall that President Obama said that all countries should refrain and wait until Israel and Palestine reach an agreement before they recognized Palestine. Now the United States of America is asking for the recognition of Kosovo and the admission of Kosovo to UNESCO. But the same principle was not applied in the case of Palestine.

Members of the Council know that at our latest meeting in Brussels we were not able to reach an agreement because the Albanian side was not willing to accept all the agreements put on the table before us. The Albanian delegation, which also included Mr. Thaçi, refused this. He now mentions propaganda and all pictures that I brought with me here of devastated sites. Can he respond to those pictures — whether they are genuine or not? Who is this person who demolished the cross on the Orthodox church? Was he arrested? Does the graffiti at this protected UNESCO World Heritage site not say "ISIS", "there is no god but Allah" and "the Caliphate is coming"? I would just like to hear a response to those questions.

I genuinely desire good relations with Pristina, and Mr. Thaçi and I have established things on the right footing and have initiated this in all good will. But I must regretfully say that the same double standard that has been applied to Israel and Palestine is being applied to Kosovo. I am here as the representative of the Republic of Serbia, and my task is to defend its interests and those of the Serbian people. When we are speaking of propaganda, I would like to point out that Kosovo has apparently already become a member of the United Nations. We should note that Mr. Thaçi's statement is presented as that of Mr. Thaçi, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo. Have we thus recognized Kosovo at this meeting of the Security Council as a Member of the United Nations? We have witnessed this kind of thing for years now and have tolerated it because we do not want to exacerbate the issues. But why are we being accused of being fascist or racist when we discuss reconciliation? How can our words be condemned when we are speaking and showing our concern about our cultural heritage? What is wrong with my statements?

I would like to clarify that issue. I am genuinely trying to find a sustainable solution to the Kosovo issue, because in the status quo we are in, while Serbia is said to be acting constructively, behind our backs preparations are being made to recognize Kosovo as a unilaterally proclaimed State. What is the difference between that unilateral act of Pristina and the situation of Israel and Palestine? I ask any country what it would do if it experienced such a thing on its territory. That is why it is important to uphold principles, and in our case every principle has been flagrantly infringed and violated. But double standards are something we will never accept. As an example of this, I can cite two statements by Hashim Thaçi recorded today, the first to the effect that our cultural heritage has never been better protected than it is today in Kosovo — when I have shown the Council the pictures of what remains of the Serbian cultural sites and monuments — and the second saying that Albanians have always constituted the majority population in Kosovo.

I should note that we wish to continue to cooperate well and to maintain our dialogue in Brussels. We are a very small country, and we cannot exert influence on the work of the Security Council. Since it has been

stated that resolution 1244 (1999) is still in force, and yet other countries are being urged not to comply with or uphold that resolution, I believe we should hold a meeting to discuss whether it is still in force and why double standards are being applied in that regard. Instead of reacting to these photographs with a concrete response, some have spoken of fascism, racism and so on. I find myself compelled to ask why I am here and why the Council wants to have a dialogue with us. Why are the great Powers saying that Serbia is a leader in the region and a factor in its stabilization? I do not wish to hear other countries insult my country, and that does not contribute to reconciliation. On 27 August Austria is organizing a meeting in Vienna, even proposing a soccer match between the countries aspiring to membership of the European Union (EU) and EU member States, and we are required to show concrete examples of such things as the preservation of cultural heritage, to demonstrate our willingness to cooperate.

I have nothing against other ethnic and religious communities speaking on the situation in Belgrade or other cities and towns in Serbia. We do not want to be told we are fascists or racists. Twenty years have passed since the war and armed conflict. Many things had changed significantly 20 years after, and since the end of the Second World War. Yet 20 years after the end of our conflict, we are still experiencing the same state of affairs and the same conflicts. I simply wished to explain my reaction to this and I will not repeat it again.

**The President**: Mr. Hashim Thaçi has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Thaçi** (*spoke in Albanian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am sorry that this platform is being misused for the purposes of political propaganda and everyday political issues in Serbia. Kosovo is a new, multi-ethnic country and a State whose citizens are equal before the law. I am very sorry that we are wasting the Security Council's time.

We could talk and debate for hours, but the facts are clear and unalterable. In my opening remarks I mentioned that there could be no document, even in this institution, capable of containing all the crimes and the genocide that Serbia committed in Kosovo. The war is over. Kosovo is an independent and sovereign country, now recognized by 111 States. It is a member of major international mechanisms and organizations. It is strengthening its international status and has built excellent relations with all the countries in the region. In the coming days we will sign a border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. We have fostered very good neighbourly relations with a view to ensuring peace and stability in the region. We have also begun to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo on an equal footing. Despite all the difficulties in implementing the agreements, the dialogue has been successful. I do not wish to discuss history here, but let me just say that Kosovo is now on a clear path towards progress and Euro-Atlantic integration, including being a part of NATO, the European Union and the United Nations.

**The President**: On behalf of the Security Council, I wold like to express our gratitude to Mr. Farid Zarif, who today made his last briefing to the Council in his capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We have appreciated his leadership of UNMIK and we wish him every success in his new assignment.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*